REPORT

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SELECTIONS FROM THE RECORDS OF THE BOMBAY GOVERNMENT.

No. LXXXVIII.—New Series.

REPORT

ON THE

REVISION OF LAND ASSESSMENT

IN THE

^^MERGAUM PEITA OF THE SUNJAUN TALOOKA, TANNA COLLECTORATE.

Bombay:
PRINTED FOR GOVERNMENT
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1865.

No. 68 of 1865.

Revenue Department.

To E. W. RAVENSCROFT, Esq.,
Officiating Chief Secretary to Government, Bombay.

Khandesh Districts, Camp Jalgaum,
11th January 1865.

Sir,—I have the honour to submit Major Francis' report on the revision of land assessment in the Oomergaum Peita of the Sunjaun Talooka of the Tanna Collectorate.

No. 646, dated 26th October 1864, to the Collector of Tanna.

2. Major Francis forwarded a preliminary report in February last, when I expressed a general approval of his proposals for the settlement. But in the absence of data sufficient for forming a correct judgment, I requested to be favoured with further particulars before finally assenting to all the details. The present report is the result of this reference.

3. The Oomergaum Division comprises 69 villages and includes a tract of country of about 206 square miles, the total computed extent being 1,32,114 acres.

4. The 69 villages are grouped into (five) classes, the 5th being made a special class as explained by the Superintendent.

5. The rates for rice lands proposed by Major Francis for the several groups of villages are as follows :—

Class.	Number of Villages.	Rates.
1st	15	Rs. 6.
2nd	24	Rs. 5½. 5.
3rd	10	Rs. 4½. 4.
4th	9	Rs. 3½. 3.
5th	11	Rs. 2½. 2.

6. The district is well adapted for the cultivation of many kinds of garden crop; but it will be observed that garden cultivation is very scanty; and it is hoped that the moderate rates (Rs. 6 and Rs. 3) fixed by the Superintendent will have the good effect of encouraging the ryots to extend garden cultivation.

7. The maximum rates (annas 10) proposed for the Wurkus land appeared to be low when it was stated that castor-oil plant was extensively cultivated in this description of soil in some parts of the district. But the further explanation given by Major Francis on this point shows that these lands are left fallow for a period of three years, and that the castor-oil plant is grown only in every third year of cultivation, so that an annual rate of annas 10 irrespective of the lands being cultivated or fallow, is not low, as was at first thought.

8. The increase in the present assessment caused by the application of the new rates is in some cases startling. But Major Francis has shown that the existing assessments afford no fair basis of comparison; and it appears that the increase over past payments is not the result of the proposed rates being unusually high, but is rendered more striking than it otherwise would have been, by the present exceedingly low standard of assessment and by the irregularities of the "Hoondabundee" system hitherto prevalent.

9. The total assessment of the arable waste lands is Rs. 4,121; and Major Francis believes that almost the whole of the waste will soon be taken up for culture. When this is taken into account, it is estimated that the Survey Settlement will add a net increase of about 50 per cent. to the land revenues of this district.

10. A redistribution of the villages in the Mamlutdar's and Mahalkurry's charges is very necessary and will be effected when the settlement of the whole Sunjaun Talooka comes under consideration.

11. I have now the honour to request the sanction of Government for the usual guarantee being given for the settlement. The Collector of Tanna has expressed his "entire concurrence" in the settlement proposed.

12. I also request sanction for the abolition of the taxes referred to in the Superintendent's paragraph 32. Similar taxes in the Mahim Talooka have already been abolished under Government Orders No. 2307 dated 20th June 1864.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,

B. H. ELLIS,
Revenue Commisioner, N. D.

No. 646 of 1864.

From Major J. FRANCIS,
Superintendent Revenue Survey and Assessment,

To S. GORDON, Esq.,
Collector of Tanna.

Poona, 26th October 1864.

Sir,—Referring to the Commissioner's letter No. 801 of 22nd March 1864, I have the honour to submit the further report called for upon the rates introduced last season into the villages of the Oombergaum Division of the Sunjan Talooka.

Paragraph 2 of Mr. Ellis' letter.

2. Instead, however, of making another separate report upon this subject, I purpose to embody herein such parts of the first or preliminary sketch as are descriptive of the general characteristics of the district, its communications, climate, &c., as also those in which the rates are explained, and the reasons for the classification or grouping of the villages stated, supplementing this with the information called for upon particular points, and with such further explanation as may seem requisite to place the whole question of the settlement before Government in a connected form and in a single report. It appears to me advisable to adopt this course, for in the first place, it will obviate the necessity of explaining the discrepancy between the estimated amount of the survey rates, as prepared from the rough papers available when the first report was drawn up, and as now obtained from the actual Settlement papers. There would of course be a discrepancy in results prepared under such different circumstances, but nevertheless it would have been necessary to explain how it occurred had the two reports been left separate. It is therefore to be understood, that whatever part of the first is not embodied in the present report, may be looked upon as cancelled.

3. The Oombergaum division, occupying the northern part of the Talook (Sunjan), is at the same time the most northerly part of the Collectorate. Touching the Portuguese territories of Damaun on its extreme north-western point, the boundary next takes a turn northwards till it meets the Damaun Gunga River. It then follows the course of that river in a north-easterly direction for a distance of about eight or nine miles—the Surat Collectorate being on the opposite bank. Leaving the river at a short distance from the point where the boundary of the latter Collectorate terminates, the outline boundary again touches on the Damaun State, extending along the latter to the villages of the Mamlutdar's division. It then turns westwards, and traversing a distance of fifteen or sixteen miles in an irregular course abuts upon the sea at a point only about four miles from Dhanoo, the head quarter station of the district. The villages of the Mamlutdar's and Mahalkurry's divisions are somewhat intermixed, and it will be necessary to revise their respective boundaries. But proposals for this measure can be more conveniently discussed when rates are submitted for the remaining part of the talook.

Comprises 69 villages all under Government management.

4. The boundaries described in the preceding paragraph include a tract of country of about 206 square miles, its total computed extent being 132,114 acres. The district comprises 69 villages, all of which come under the operation of the settlement, as they are all under Government management.

5. The surface of the country is unusually flat for a Conkan district, especially in the northern part adjoining the Damaun Gunga River. The division is generally traversable by carts in all directions. The main road from Surat to Bombay runs along the coast. There is also another road a few miles inland known as the "army road," being the route by which troops march through these districts to the stations of the Northern Division of the Army. The above mentioned are not made roads, (for there is not a mile of made road in the district) but broad country tracks, which will be almost entirely supplanted by the Bombay and Baroda Railway when that line is opened for public traffic.

6. The greater part of the produce of the district is exported to Surat. The best bunder is at the chief town of Oombergaum. There are other places along the coast where boats anchor to land and take in produce. But with the exception of a small traffic in the exchange of products with Surat, no trade worth mentioning exists.

7. The feverish nature of the climate, and the scanty population of the district are the circumstances which seem to require our special notice as affecting the rates. There is, however, a considerable difference in these respects in different parts of the district. The villages along the coast for instance, though not exempt from fever for the first two or three months after the monsoon, have a fair climate upon the whole, and are generally rather thickly inhabited. They have all the advantage of the coast bunders for the export of their produce, and are also within an easy distance of the Bombay and and Baroda Railway. None of the inland villages are, however, far distant from these communications, for the eastern border of the district is not more than 16 or 18 miles from the coast at its widest point. But the scanty population, and the very unhealthy character of the climate of that locality, outweigh the advantages which it would otherwise possess in virtue of its position.

8. I am of opinion, therefore, in consideration of the circumstances mentioned above, which materially affect the value of land, that in fixing the rates for this division, it will be advisable to depart to some extent from our general settlement Rules, which prescribe that the rates of a district shall be apportioned upon a graduated scale fixed with reference to distance from markets and facilities of communication. If, for instance, this plan of rating were applied to the inland villages of this district, I should not be justified in making a reduction of more than 50 per cent. between the rates of the coast and of the most inland villages. But the latter would be quite unable to bear the rate which would be fixed upon this plan of operation. They are of a special character, and in my opinion need a special rate fixed irrespectively of the general considerations above mentioned.

9. A special rate being fixed for the unhealthy and thinly populated villages, I consider that the remaining part of the district may

be apportioned into four main classes of rates (for rice lands) in the following manner :—

Class.	Rates.	No. of Villages.	Reasons for fixing class.
1	6	15	Almost all these villages adjoin the coast.
2	5½ 5	24	These villages are distant from three to six miles from the coast, being generally pretty well populated.
3	4½ 4	10	Lying east of the preceding and extending inland eight or ten miles, somewhat unhealthy, but pretty well cultivated.
4	3½ 3	9	Still further east than the preceding, jungly, unhealthy, and thinly populated.
Special Class.	2½ 2	11	The special class (see remarks in paragraph 8.)

10. As shown above, all the villages have been divided into four main groups. For the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th of these groups, I have made use of an intermediate rate of ½ Rupee in excess of the proper rate of the group, *i.e.* the rate for the 2nd group is 5½ as well as 5 Rs. This plan of rating has been adopted, as I have had occasion to explain in former reports, with the view of meeting the case of villages in such a position, that the rate of the superior group would appear to be too high, and that of the next inferior too low for them : the use of the intermediate rate in such cases obviates any material inequality of assessment in adjoining villages.

11. The soil and climate of the coast part of this district appear to be well suited to the cultivation of the cocoanut, and other garden crops. But these natural advantages have not been turned to account, for an area of about 10 acres includes the whole extent of garden cultivation in this tract. There is also a small extent of what is called garden land in some of the more inland villages. The cultivation in the latter case is confined for the most part to vege-

tables, irrigated from kucha wells, which are worked in the dry season only. Three Rupees is the rate at which the assessment of the latter has been calculated, whilst six Rupees was the maximum rate adopted for the garden lands of the coast villages. Both rates appear to be applicable and may be formally confirmed.

12. The same may be said with respect to the maximum rate of Rs. $1\frac{1}{2}$ proposed for Rubbee cultivation. There are a few fields in some of the villages bordering on Surat, where wheat is regularly cultivated in the Rubbee lands of this district. The extent of this cultivation is inconsiderable, and as the yield appeared to me from inspection to be much less than in regular Jerayet lands, I do not think it necessary to make any alteration in the rate hitherto fixed for Rubbee lands, on account of this exceptional cultivation.

13. The Wurkus lands of this Mahal are of a peculiar character, and unlike those of any other district of the Collectorate. The soil is of a dullish black texture of considerable depth, and too retentive of moisture for the growth of Nachnee and Naglee, which are the great Wurkus crops of other districts. It is suitable, however, for the castor-oil plant, which is extensively cultivated in some parts. The Ryots also grow an inferior kind of rice as an occasional crop in these black soils. Lands of this kind are more valuable than the ordinary Wurkus. Bearing this in mind, I devised a plan of classification specially for the district, which was so arranged that the best soils of the kind (such as are suited for the crops above mentioned) should be valued at 10 annas in a Rupee scale.

14. It was proposed in the sketch report, that the rate worked out by the classification valuation on the scale explained above, should be the maximum for these peculiar lands. The late Acting Collector seemed to think that this rate of 10 annas was too low for a soil which he represents to be somewhat similar to the "Beysur" of the southern portion of the Surat Collectorate, and the Revenue Commissioner inclining to the same opinion, directed me to ascertain whether some increase should not be made to the rates proposed for these peculiar soils.

15. I have never had an opportunity of seeing the soils in Surat to which Mr. Robertson alludes. But this is not a matter of any consequence perhaps, for as I have carefully examined the black soils

of this division in several villages, and inquired into the manner in which they are cultivated and the nature of their produce, I feel myself fully qualified to pronounce a decided opinion upon the rates suited for them. I was inclined at first to think with the Commissioner and Mr. Robertson that the rates fixed were too low, but subsequent inquiries have led me to form a different opinion, as I shall explain in the sequel.

16. In the first place, we must be careful to bear in mind, that, although the soil is black, it nevertheless requires a fallow like other Wurkus lands, generally of three years, after three and sometimes two only of cultivation,—that is to say, that the soil is productive only every other season on the average. It is obvious, therefore, that the ten anna rate, fixed *as a sum to be annually levied*, is equivalent to a maximum rate of $1\frac{1}{4}$ Rs. per acre on lands capable of continuous cultivation. It is probable that the Collector supposes the soil to be capable of annual cultivation, and it might possibly be made so by an improved system of husbandry and the introduction of a new rotation of crops. It is not for us, however, in fixing an assessment, to speculate upon the probabilities of this or that improvement being brought about. Our rates must be regulated by the existing state of things. In this case, therefore, we must treat these soils as not capable of continuous cultivation,—that is to say, as being productive only every other year.

17. According to the system of cultivation generally followed, a castor oil crop is sown the first year after fallow—followed by a crop of Hurreek or Kodroo as it is here called—and when a third crop is taken in succession, it is generally of teel, though a second of Kodroo is occasionally grown. Of these the castor oil is the only crop that can be called a valuable one, and that would indicate these soils to assimilate to Jerayet lands in other districts. But if we examine the crop we shall find that the plant does not grow luxuriantly to a height of 5 or 6 feet, as I believe it does in Guzerat, but that it is generally small and stunted looking of only 2 or 3 feet in height, yielding but an indifferent return. The other two are purely Wurkus crops, so that we may say that one year in five or six a cultivator can grow this more valuable castor oil product, and in consideration of this, I have fixed the rate at more than double ordinary

Wurkus rates, or at half the sum that has been fixed in many places in the Deccan for good black soil capable of being regularly cultivated.

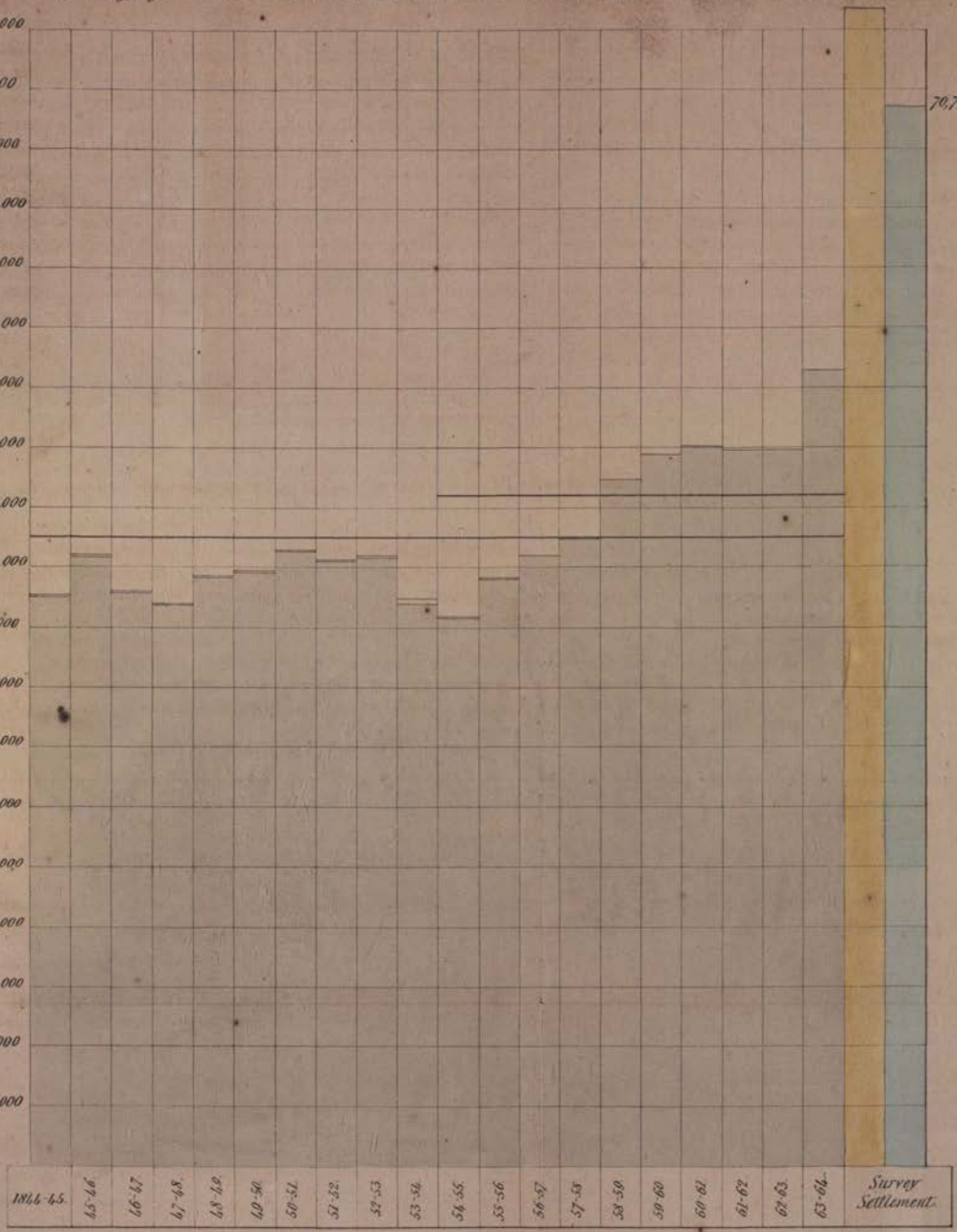
18. The most valuable lands of the kind are to be found in a few of the villages situated in the north-eastern corner of the district bordering on the Surat Collectorate. The villages referred to, were put under the second class of rates for rice lands, and had a lower rate assigned to their Wurkus. This was an evident mistake which I have now corrected by including them (11) in number under the 10 anna maximum or highest Wurkus rate. With this exception, no further change in the original proposals is advisable as regards the rates for this cultivation. If, indeed, I have any doubt on the subject, it is on the side of their being found too high. I trust such will not be the case, for lands of the kind would then be held only for the period they are under cultivation, and thrown up when a fallow is needed. The object of the settlement would thus be defeated, as it has been my aim to fix a rate at which they would be regularly occupied.

19. The following statement exhibits the result of the assessment calculated upon the modified rates explained in the preceding paragraph :—

	Revenue due on Cultivation of 1863-64.				Value of Waste.	Total of Assessment.
	Rice.	Wurkus and Jerayet.	Rubbee and Garden.	Total.		
Proposed rates..	54,135	10,761	1,759	66,655	4,121	70,776
Present settlement	47,776	5,071	243	53,090	No record.	53,090
Increase.....	6,359	5,690	1,516	13,565	4,121	17,686

20. The foregoing statement shows that the new assessment will effect an increase of about Rs. 13,500, or about 26 per cent, in the revenue realizable last year under the old settlement. The amount, however, shown as the realizable revenue in this case, was not collected, but brought to account for comparison with the survey

DIAGRAM exhibiting the extent of Government Land annually under Cultivation for the last 20 years in 69 Villages of the OOMBURGAON PETTA in the SUNJAN TALOOK, and its Gross and Net Assessment.



EXPLANATION.

1. The various items are measured by the Scale of Acres and Rupees across the Diagram.
2. The summit of the darker colored portion of each column indicates the rental, and of the lighter the Gross assessment on the Cultivated Land, the intermediate spaces the amount of Remissions.
3. The Yellow lines show the extent of Cultivation in Acres for each Year.
4. The Horizontal thick Lines mark the average Net Rental for 20 and 10 Years.
5. The summit of the Blue Column shows Estimated maximum rental according to the proposed rates of Assessment and of the Yellow the total Acres by the New measurement.

EXAMPLE for the Year 1862-63

Cultivated Acres	0.
Assessment thereon	47,830.
Actual Realizations	47,792
Remissions	38

* This information is not obtainable for this District as no Record of the Cultivated Area exists.

assessment—the difference between the two being adjusted in the usual way, viz. by remitting on individual ryot's payments all excess on the survey assessment, and collecting the *latter only* where less than the payment under the old settlement. Owing to the remissions and deductions made in this way, the actual amount realized as land revenue—distinct from the tax levied specially on date trees to be referred to hereafter—amounted only to Rs. 42,683. There is no doubt the full amount realizable under the old settlement would have been easily collected had the latter remained in force, for the gram commutation rate, on which the revenue was partly calculated, was fixed at the low sum of Rs. 20 per candy for rice, whereas the market rate was double that sum.

21. If we reject last year's return of revenue as being exceptional for the reasons given above, and on the further ground of its being 5 or 6,000 Rs. in excess of any other year's collections, and compare the new assessment with the annual realizations shown in the diagram, which embraces a period of 20 years, the result shows very favourably for the new settlement. The following statement will serve to confirm the correctness of the foregoing remarks, viz.:—

	Amount.	Survey Assessment on present Cultivation.	Increase due to Survey.	
			Amount.	Per-centage rate.
Revenue realized in 1862-63	47,792	66,655	18,863	39
Average of the past 10 years' revenue.	44,786	66,655	21,869	49
do. do. 20 do.	42,038	66,655	24,617	59

22. The increase by the several comparisons above given ranges from 39 to 59 per cent. The assessment of the waste lands amounts to Rs. 4,121. A considerable part of the latter has been put into lots and reserved specially for sale by public auction, and from inquiry it is probable that the occupancy right of some of the larger tracts in

the villages on the line of railway will realize a considerable sum. There is no doubt, at any rate, that, with the exception perhaps of a few small detached pieces, the whole of the assessed waste will soon be under cultivation. We may assume, therefore, that the Survey Settlement will add a net increase of about 50 per cent. to the land revenues of this division.

23. But, besides the assessment above referred to, a further revenue will be realized from the levy of a rate on date trees, which have hitherto been subject to a payment to the land revenue independently of the Abkharee Tax levied specially for the privilege of distilling and selling liquor made from the juice of the tree. I have submitted a separate report, No. 505; dated 4th October 1864, explaining the manner in which I propose to realize a revenue in future from a tree tax, as also the system under which the Abkharee Tax should be managed. The question has been discussed at some length in the letter referred to, and it would seem to be sufficient in this place to explain that the revenue from this source will probably amount to about 9 or 10,000 Rs. per annum.

24. In forming an opinion as to whether the district can bear the assessment proposed, we must consider, in the first place, that the increase over past payment is not the result of any extraordinary or unusually high rate. The adjoining district of Mahim was assessed upon the same rate, which was not found to be too high in that case. It is true it did not cause so large an increase over past realizations from the district, as it does in the present instance, but that is not attributable to any difference in the system of operations, for the same plan of classification and rating has been adhered to in both cases—the difference in result being due to the difference in the amount of the former assessment; in other words, the larger increase in Oombergaum is attributable solely to the existence of a lower standard of assessment in that district.

25. Great part of the land of Oombergaum has been held under what is commonly known as the "Hondabundee system," which may be described to be an assessment fixed in the lump for a certain extent of rice and Wurkus land combined. The boundaries of these "Hondas" or different allotments were never well defined, probably

owing to the jungly character of the district, and in the lapse of time their original limits seem to have been entirely lost sight of, for otherwise it is impossible to account for the discrepancies in the size and value of the Hondas which have been brought to light at the time of settlement. The general result shows that a large portion of the land of the division has been held at a mere nominal rate under this Hondabundee system.

26. Some examples of the great increases and decreases in the assessment of villages caused by the survey rates, were given in the sketch report. These, however, though rather remarkable, were by no means extreme cases. The following examples are more striking instances of great rises in the assessment of individual villages:—

Names of Villages.	Payments under old Settlement.	Survey Assessment on cultivated area.	Increase.	
			Amount.	Per-centage rate.
Chimbwa	100	469	369	369
Konowra.....	110	352	242	220
Dohod.....	111	286	175	158
Aklus	312	932	620	182

27. There are cases, you will perceive, in which the Survey Settlement effects an increase of 369 per cent. on past payments. The ryots, however, made no demur whatever in accepting the settlement on these terms. On the contrary they were most anxious to secure the waste, and I remember one case (village of Konowra) where they objected in a body to my disposing of it to any other person, and agreed at once to take up the whole amongst themselves. This was a village held entirely by cultivators of the Warulee tribe.

28. But though the increases on past payments for whole villages are rather striking, they are quite thrown into the shade in comparison

with those relating to individual holdings. The following are a few of these cases picked out of the settlement papers:—

Payment under Settlement.	Survey Assessment on same land.	Increase.
Rs. a.	Rs. a.	Rs. a.
1 12	24 3	22 7
2 9	20 11	18 2
3 11	62 14	59 3
7 0	51 14	44 14
10 12	104 4	93 8

It is here shown that there are instances of payments being raised from Rs. 3-11 to Rs. 62-14,— in short, the old settlement, as a rule, bore no proportion whatever to the value of the land held by the cultivator.

29. It will be evident from this analysis of the old settlement, that it was so imperfect a measure that it is useless as a standard of comparison for estimating what assessment the division can bear. The fact, therefore, of the assessment now introduced being in many cases so greatly in excess of former payments, is no proof of its being a heavy assessment, for this result is adduced by comparison with a settlement which had no standard either of measurement or valuation as the basis of its operations.

30. I have considered the subject in all its bearings, and am convinced that the proposed settlement may be safely sanctioned. Indeed, were it not for the jungly nature of part of the district, and the uncivilized character of the inhabitants* generally, I should certainly have recommended the imposition of a higher rate for rice land. It is to be hoped, however, that the favourable terms conceded for 30 years will have the effect of opening out the resources of a district which is capable of considerable improvement.

* The Warulees. A separate report upon this tribe has been recently submitted.

31. The right to levy one anna per rupee for roads and schools has been specially reserved—the reservation being recorded in the village taraobund.

32. There exists in this division a capitation tax* similar in its provisions to that formerly obtaining in the Mahim District, which has been recently abolished. The reasons for which the tax was abolished in the latter case are equally applicable in the present. I would, therefore, request that the Mahim order may be extended to this division in respect to this levy. The sum of Rs. 640-10-0 was realized from the tax this year, and a further sum of Rs. 43-3-0 from a "Bab" called "Mahal Mujkoor" which should also be abolished.

* Called "Augdehne."

33. It remains for me to explain the cause of the delay in submitting this report. It was my intention at first to embody in it the proposals recently submitted for the taxation of date trees. It occurred to me afterwards, that that subject could be more conveniently discussed separately and apart from the general question of the settlement. I decided accordingly to submit a separate report upon it. But, until this point was decided, I was unable to complete the present report, which consequently remained in abeyance for a time.

34. The usual number of copies of the diagram will be submitted hereafter, as also a small sketch map of the division.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

J. T. FRANCIS, Major,

Supt. Rev. Survey and Assessment,

Tanna and Rutnagherry.

No. 578.

REVENUE DEPARTMENT,

Bombay Castle, 13*th February* 1865,

RESOLUTION.—The Governor in Council approves of the rates proposed by Major Francis, and is pleased to sanction the usual guarantee being given for the settlement.

2. The Governor in Council is also pleased to sanction the abolition of the taxes referred to in paragraph 32 of Major Francis' Report.

E. W. RAVENSCROFT,

Offg. Chief Secretary to Government.

To the REVENUE COMMISSIONER, N.D.

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on 27 November, 2018